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Paul Bethel, Sometime Miamian

He's The Man Behind The 'Free Cuba News'

By LEE WINFREY
Of Our Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — "Castro's factories are turning out a daily quota of 1,000 size 46 'campaign uniforms' for Russian," the first sentence of the Free Cuba News



...said, "that ... he ... Cuba as his ... major base for world-wide Communist activities and that he apparently is moving to protect that base through full Russian occupation."

The newspaper's report on the uniform manufacturing, although not the conclusion it drew from that activity, was picked up by the wire services and distributed nationwide. Once again, the Free Cuba News was in the news itself.

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TWICE a month, the attractively-printed, eight-page pamphlet arrives at the desks of several congressmen, many reporters and a scattering of public officials in Washington. It paints a harsh picture of life in Castro's Cuba, with strong undertone hints that the U.S. government is not doing enough to make things better.

The editor of the Free Cuba News is Paul D. Bethel, who quit the State Department in disgust in 1961 and has lived since then in Miami.

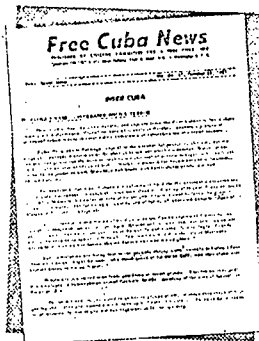
Bethel, 44, is a broad-shouldered, athletic-looking man with a mane of blond hair, heavy, black-rimmed glasses, two gold rings on the third finger of his left hand, and a voice full of self-confidence loaded with "information," he'll tell you without batting an eye.

"Cuban groups in Miami and New York provide the information, which we evaluate. We receive reports daily from inside Cuba. We never go with a story unless it is corroborated by three other sources. Congressmen have called on us scores of times for opinions and prognostications."

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THE CITIZENS Committee for a Free Cuba, Inc., pays Bethel to put out the Free Cuba News for them. The committee members lean heavily toward the conservative (Admiral Arleigh Burke, Dr. Sideney Hook, Clare Booth Luce and Dr. Edward Teller), but Bethel insists: "We are certainly not anti-administration."

He would probably get an



argument on that from some members of the administration. Says one source who has watched the paper since it began last May:

"When the committee was formed, I was impressed. Frankly, I've been disappointed. The newsletter appears to repeat in large part the usual kind of unverified exile reports. It is not as factual and hard as one would expect from such a distinguished group."

Such stings annoy Bethel.

He concedes the use of much exile material, but adds, "We quote for the most part from the Cuban government itself, from the internal communications network. I think our information is quite hard."

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BETHEL spent 12 years with the State Department. At his resignation, the last three in Cuba as press attache with the U.S. Embassy in Havana. He resigned, he said, "because I couldn't see a coherent policy toward Cuba and Latin America at all."

In Dade County his wife and teenaged daughter and son live in Miami Shores. Bethel goes back and forth from his Washington office about once a month.

The arrangement is often awkward, but Bethel intends to continue it. "I think I'll maintain my Miami residence," he said. "I have a hunch someday I may run for Congress down there."